Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for providing interactive television (ITV) content for a [[video]] television program via a server over a data communications network, the method comprising:

receiving client software for a client to operate on a user-based hardware device that has the ability to control a display, the client software including:

base software for causing ITV information to be displayed on the display and including software responsive to messages relating to different types of ITV interactivity,

program content applicable to a plurality of television episodes of the video television program, and

episode content applicable to a particular one of the plurality of television episodes of the video television program, wherein the program content and the episode content are downloaded to the client before the beginning of the particular television episode, the episode content including interactive ITV components with ITV information for later display during the particular television episode and being received by the client before the beginning of the particular television episode, the interactive ITV components being displayed during the particular television episode in accordance with predetermined times or in response to messages from the server and prompting user interaction in response to the display of the interactive ITV components;

during the particular television episode the client receiving from the server over the data communications network a message associated with at least one of the downloaded interactive ITV components related to the particular television episode, the message including a message type identifier selected from a plurality of predefined message type identifiers, wherein the

message type identifier identifies a specific ~~type of~~ layout template irrespective of the [[video]] television program for displaying at least one of the downloaded ITV components; and

the base software receiving the message, retrieving from the message the associated message type identifier, retrieving the layout ~~information~~ template stored in the client specific to the message type identifier, and formatting the at least one of the downloaded ~~interactive~~ ITV components in a particular layout format based on the retrieved layout ~~information~~ template for causing to be displayed on the display the at least one of the downloaded ~~interactive~~ ITV components in the particular layout format, wherein the message type identifier minimizes data transfer over the data communications network by avoiding transmitting with the message specific graphics data that achieves the particular layout format.

2.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising, for a next episode, receiving new episode content with components related to the next episode prior to the beginning of the next episode without again receiving the program content and the base software.

3.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising, for an episode of a different program, receiving a different program content and a different episode content without again receiving the base software prior to the beginning of the episode of the different program, and using the base software with the different program content and the different episode content for the episode of the different program.

4.   (Cancelled)

5.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein ~~at least two of the types of interactive~~ ITV components include a question to which a user can respond.

6.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5, wherein the ~~interactive~~ ITV components include a trivia question and a poll.

7.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the message includes the message type identifier corresponding to the layout template for trivia questions, and includes text for a particular trivia question, the base software being responsive to the message type identifier corresponding to the layout template for trivia questions and formatting and displaying the text in the particular layout format corresponding to trivia questions question layouts.

8.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 7, wherein the formatting further includes displaying a point count for the particular trivia question that changes with time.

9.   (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein the base software, responsive to a user entering an answer, causes the answer to be provided to the server to determine if it is correct.

10.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 7, wherein the base software, responsive to a user entering an answer, checks the answer against an answer stored as part of the episode content.

11.   (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein one of the client and server corrects the answer, the client receiving from the server and displaying a point total for multiple users interacting at the same time with the server.

12.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the client is presentation layer independent.

13.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the client operates with a particular type of presentation software.

14.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the client sending messages from the user to the server and receiving messages from other users via the server in a chat functionality during the particular episode of the program.

15.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the episode content includes a plurality of advertisements, the base software being responsive to messages for causing one of the advertisements to be displayed.

16.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the client is responsive to the receipt of the message and audio or video information for synchronizing the audio or video information to the type of interactivity indicated by the message.

17.   (Currently Amended) A method for a server to provide interactive television (ITV) content for a [[video]] television program over a data communications network, the method comprising:

providing client software to a client with a user-based hardware device having the ability to control a display, the client software including:

base software for causing ITV information to be displayed on the display,

program content applicable to a plurality of television episodes of the [[video]] television program, and

episode content applicable to a particular one of the plurality of television episodes of the [[video]] television program, wherein the program content and episode content are provided to the client before the beginning of the particular television episode, the episode content including interactive ITV components with ITV information for later display during the particular television episode, the interactive ITV components prompting user interaction in response to the display of the interactive ITV components;

during the particular television episode, the server providing to the client over the data communications network a message associated with at least one of the interactive ITV

components previously provided to the client and related to the particular television episode, the message including a message type identifier selected from a plurality of predefined message type identifiers for causing the base software receiving the message to retrieve from the message the associated message type identifier, retrieve the layout ~~information~~ template stored in the client specific to the message type identifier, and format the at least one of the ~~interactive~~ ITV components in a particular layout format based on the retrieved layout ~~information~~ template for displaying the ITV ~~interactive~~ component in the particular layout format, wherein the message type identifier identifies a specific ~~type of~~ layout template irrespective of the [[video]] television program and minimizes data transfer over the data communications network by avoiding transmitting with the message specific graphics data that achieves the particular layout format.

18.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 17, further comprising, for a next episode, providing new episode content with a plurality of components prior to the beginning of the next episode without again providing the program content and the base software.

19.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 17, further comprising, for an episode of a different program, providing a different program content and a different episode content without again providing the base software prior to the beginning of the episode.

20.   (Cancelled)

21.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 17, wherein one of the ~~types of interactivity~~ ITV components include a question to which the user can respond, the message including [[a]] the message type identifier and [[a]] the question.

22.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21, wherein the ~~types of interactivity~~ ITV components include a trivia question and a poll.

23.   (Original) The method of claim 21, wherein the server is responsive to the base software providing either an answer for correction or an indication that the answer was correct for providing to users point totals indicting points in response to the answers provided.

24.   (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein the client is provided to be presentation layer independent.

25.   (Original) The·method of claim 17, wherein the client is provided and adapted to operate on a particular type of presentation software.

26.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 17, further comprising invoking a software interface for managing the server and providing messages to and receiving messages from the server.

27.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 26, wherein the server provides messages received from users to the software interface during the episode, wherein the software interface is further invoked to transmit responses to the server for forwarding to the users.

28.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 26, wherein at least some questions for responses are transmitted by the software interface to the server, and thereafter to the users on-the-fly during the particular episode.

29.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 26, wherein the program is a television program, wherein the software interface is invoked to provide the program or episode content to the server for transmission to the users, the program or episode content being stored and timed to be received by the user in such a way that the program or episode content is synchronized to the television program to display content relevant to the program at that time.

30.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29, wherein the program or episode content is provided to be stored in advance of being displayed and is timed to appear at selected times.

31.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30, wherein the software interface receives supplemental content in response to a human input and provides the supplemental content on the fly as a supplement to the program or episode content provided to be stored in advance.

32.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29, wherein the software interface receives supplemental content in response to a human input and provides the supplemental content on the fly to appear at a desired time such that the supplemental content is relevant to the program at the desired time.

33.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 17, wherein the episode content includes a plurality of advertisements for client storage, the server sending messages to indicate to the client that the client should cause one of the stored advertisements to be displayed.

34.   (Previously Presented) The methods of claim 17, wherein the server provides audio or video information synchronized to textual messages to cause the textual messages to be displayed with the audio and/or video content.

35.   (Original) The method of claim 17, where messages can be provided to thousands of users at the same time.

36-45. (Cancelled)

46.   (Currently Amended) A method for providing interactive television (ITV) content for a [[video]] television program over a data communications network, the method comprising:

a client receiving interactive ITV content applicable to an episode of the [[video]] television program from a server for storage on user-based hardware that also controls what is ITV information displayed on a display, the interactive ITV content including a plurality of interactive ITV components prompting user interaction in response to the display of the interactive ITV components, the client receiving the interactive ITV content prior to the beginning of the episode of the [[video]] television program;

during the episode of the [[video]] television program, receiving a message over the data communications network from a server associated with at least one of the plurality of interactive ITV components of the stored interactive ITV content to be displayed, the message including a message type identifier selected from a plurality of predefined message type identifiers, wherein the message type identifier identifies a specific type of layout template irrespective of the [[video]] television program; and

the user-based hardware retrieving from the message the associated message type identifier, retrieving the layout information template stored in the client specific to the message type identifier, and formatting the at least one of the interactive ITV components in a particular layout format based on the retrieved layout information template for displaying the interactive ITV component in the particular layout format, wherein the message type identifier minimizes data transfer over the data communications network by avoiding transmitting with the message specific graphics data that achieves the particular layout format.

47.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 46, further comprising receiving additional content on-the-fly for display during the [[video]] television program.

48.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 46, further comprising, prior to receipt of any of a plurality of episodes of the [[video]] television program, receiving common

content related to the plurality of episodes, and prior to each episode, downloading content particular to that episode.

49.   (Currently Amended) A method for providing interactive television (ITV) content for a [[video]] television program over a data communications network, the method comprising:

a server providing over the data communications network ITV interactive content applicable to an episode of the [[video]] television program to a user-based hardware for storage, the user-based hardware including control software to control the display of interactive ITV content to a user, the interactive ITV content including a plurality of interactive ITV components prompting user interaction in response to the display of the interactive ITV components, the server providing the interactive ITV content prior to the beginning of the episode of the [[video]] television program; and

during the episode of the [[video]] television program, providing a message over the data communications network from a server to the user-based hardware, the message being associated with at least one of the plurality of interactive ITV components of the previously stored interactive ITV content to be accessed and displayed, the message including a message type identifier selected from a plurality of predefined message type identifiers, wherein the message type identifier identifies a specific type of layout template irrespective of the [[video]] television program for displaying the at least one of the plurality of ITV components, the user-based hardware being configured to retrieve from the message the associated message type identifier, retrieve the layout information template stored in the client specific to the message type identifier, and format the at least one of the interactive ITV components in a particular layout format based on the retrieved layout information template for displaying the interactive ITV component in the particular layout format, wherein the message type identifier minimizes data transfer over the data communications network by avoiding transmitting with the message specific graphics data that achieves the particular layout format.

50.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 49, further comprising providing additional content for display on-the-fly during the [[video]] television program.

51.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein at least one of the ~~interactive~~ ITV components is displayed based on predetermined times during the particular episode.

52.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 51, wherein further ~~interactive~~ ITV components are received and displayed on-the-fly.

53.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the predefined message type identifiers are identifiers of layout templates for formatting layout of ITV component selected from a group consisting of facts, trivia questions, and poll questions.

54.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 53, wherein the ~~interactive~~ ITV components prompt user responses to the trivia or poll questions.

55.   (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 1, wherein the client software is stand-alone application.

56.   (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 1, wherein the client software is a web-browser application.

57.   (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the graphics data is preloaded by the client and the base software retrieves the preloaded graphics data that achieves the particular layout format.

58.   (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the base software dynamically formats the at least one of the ITV components based on the message type identifier.